

are indebted to our Curators. Within the last fortnight, however, every case with its contents has been removed, and the specimens re-arranged."

Mr. Johns concluded by moving thanks to the Curators, which was carried.

The Rev. W. S. Hore, F.L.S., F.G.S., in returning thanks on behalf of himself and colleague, said that the requisite time and labour had been most readily and willingly given. "We only regret," he added, "that the limited means of the Society prevented us from making a more splendid display this evening, though the additional labour might to us have been sensibly increased. Numerous specimens of rare Mammals and Birds are in our drawers, which the expense of mounting alone prevented us from displaying amongst our other treasures. I would also beg to remind the Members that the geological and mineralogical specimens possessed by the Society are not exposed to view in consequence of the room intended as the Museum for that branch of Natural History not having yet been prepared for their reception. When exhibited, they will prove that much attention has been paid to the geology of this and the neighbouring county by the Geological Section." Mr. Hore then alluded to the advantages of the location which had been selected, and which, independently of the increased accommodation, would afford facilities to such residents in Devonport and Stonehouse as might feel inclined to join the Society, which already presented encouraging prospects of increase.

Mr. J. C. Bellamy also returned thanks, and acknowledged the valuable assistance which had been received from Mr. Sampson, and from Mr. Pincombe, the Preserver to the Society.

Votes of thanks were also passed to Mr. P. F. Bellamy, Treasurer, and Mr. R. Saunders, Secretary.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

*Dianthus plumarius*.—Since the publication of my note upon this plant in the 'Annals of Nat. Hist.' vi. 313, Mr. Dillwyn has been so kind as to send for my inspection another specimen of *Dianthus*, gathered by him on July 13, 1809, at "Black Rock, about a mile from Cork," in company with Mr. Drummond, Mr. Jos. Woods and Dr. Leach. This specimen turns out to be the true *D. plumarius*, which will therefore retain its place in the Flora of Ireland. It is singular that the *only specimen* seen by Mr. Mackay, and expressly referred to by him, should be different from those gathered from the rock by the above gentlemen.—CHARLES C. BABINGTON.

*Salicaria luscinioides*.—Since our record of the occurrence of this species in Cambridgeshire, we have been favoured with a communication from Joseph Clarke, Esq., of Saffron Walden, stating that he possesses one example of this Warbler, and that another is in the collection at the Museum of Saffron Walden. From other circumstances that have come to our knowledge, there is reason to believe this is not so rare a bird in the British Islands as might be supposed, and has very probably been undistinguished from *Salicaria arundinacea*.

*The Tomtits and the Beehives*.—"One of our lads came to us one

morning with a face full of importance, to inquire if we were aware of the depredations that the Tomtits were committing on the Bee-hives. He had, he said, been watching them for some time, and the way in which the Tits proceed is to strike hard with their bills on the boards on which the hives are placed; this noise awakens the bees, who come forth to learn from whence it proceeds, and their artful and merciless assailants immediately pounce upon and kill all who are not fortunate enough to escape, and either eat them on the spot or fly off with them to a neighbouring tree or shrub, and there devour them; and in this way great numbers are destroyed. The child further told us that he had witnessed the same attacks on his father's bees at their cottage among the woods, and that his parents are in the habit of setting traps for the cannibals, and he requested to be furnished with mouse-traps; these were given to him, and he placed them on the board at the mouth of each hive, and has already succeeded in killing five or six of the felons, who have thus paid with their lives for their murderous thievery."—*From a Correspondent in West Kent* \*.

*Larus glaucus*.—*Larus capistratus*.—Mr. S. Mummery, of Bath-road, Margate, informs us of his having shot at Kingsgate, on the 6th of January (the weather being snowy with a strong easterly wind), a Glaucous Gull, one of the finest specimens he had ever seen, a male in full plumage, and now in the Margate Museum.—Also that two fine specimens of the Brown-headed Gull had been captured; one of them having been shot at Westgate-bay, between Margate and Birchington. This was alone and very tame, allowing Mr. Mummery's friend, who shot it, to approach very near before it attempted to fly. The other was shot by himself near Kingsgate. Both are males: one of these is now in the museum, and the other is for sale. In reference to Mr. Jenyns's remark that the food and nidification of this Gull are unknown, Mr. Mummery states that they feed on small fish that are near the water's edge, such as dace, &c., also on shrimps and worms. Their nests they build in the high cliffs of Dover, where specimens in full plumage can be obtained in the spring; as also their eggs, by lowering a man over the cliffs. The birds are to be seen flying about half-way up in great abundance.

Mr. Mummery offers, in the exercise of his occupation as a collector, to furnish those who may apply to him with nearly the whole of the aquatic birds in their different stages of plumage, with their eggs, in exchange for inland birds.

*A strange News-Carrier*.—A friend lately arrived from sea has furnished us with the following information, copied from a shipping

\* [Our esteemed correspondent will find that Mr. Yarrell (*Birds*, vol. i. 341) states of the Marsh Titmouse, that "it is said to be an enemy to bees;" and mentions, under *Parus cæruleus*, an item in a churchwarden's account for seventeen dozen of Tomtits' heads. They are said to crush the bees with great adroitness transversely in their beak repeatedly, so as to escape being stung.—Ed.]

report at St. Helena:—"The brig Memnon, belonging to Nantz, when off the Cape of Good Hope, caught an Albatros, having a ribbon round its neck, with a quill sealed at both ends, containing a slip of paper with the following words, viz. 'Ship Leonidas of Salem, bound to New Zealand, 74 days out, latitude 40° south, longitude 26° east.' The Leonidas, Eagleston master, sailed from this port (Salem, Massachusetts) on the 9th of August, 1839, and this is the first intelligence from her."—*Essex (Massachusetts) Register*, Feb. 1840.—J. M.

*Locusts at Sea.*—The Essex (Massachusetts) Register publishes the following account, on authority of a letter from the mate of the brig Levant, of Boston, to his friend in Beverly, dated Montevideo, Jan. 17, last port. The mate writes, that after having encountered a severe gale on the 13th September, when in latitude of 18° north, and the nearest land being over 450 miles, they were surrounded for two days by large swarms of Locusts, of a large size; and in the afternoon of the second day, in a squall from the north-west, the sky was completely black with them. They covered every part of the brig immediately, sails, rigging, cabin, &c. It is a little singular how they could have supported themselves in the air so long, as there was no land to the north-west for several thousand miles. Two days afterwards, the weather being moderate, the brig sailed through swarms of them floating dead upon the waters.—J. M., March 1840.

*Santa Cruz.*—"The travelling in Santa Cruz is rapid and easy, and the evening drives through the picturesque valleys in the neighbourhood of West End, afford a luxurious enjoyment, even for invalids.

"On the top of the spiral rod of the cabbage-palm I have frequently observed a handsome gray bird, somewhat less than a thrush, called the Chincherry, Like the king-bird of North America, it is said to mock even the hawk, and to assert its dominion over all the fowls of the air. Humming-birds and bright little barbets are seen contending for the blossomed sweets of the yellow cedar; a sly-looking black bird, in shape like a jay, and generally called the black witch, abounds in the hedges; quails and minute doves are numerous, and a small species of bittern is often seen floating along over the lower grounds of the island. Lastly, the brown pelicans, on the sea-coast, flopping lazily over the waters, and ever and anon diving for their prey, are as numerous as gulls on the coast of Great Britain. It may be well to observe that the southern part of Santa Cruz is an extensive plain, I believe of shell-limestone formation. The highlands, composed of an indurated clay, conspicuously stratified, and tossed into various angles by some vast impulse from below, form the northern barrier; and very beautiful is their undulation. The loftiest of these hills is Mount Eagle, which rises 1200 feet above the level of the sea. An hour's ride from West End brings you to the top of Prospect or Bodkin Hill, from which there is a magnificent bird's-eye view both of the hills and plains, all, with

little exception, under careful sugar cultivation. But it is on the sea-shores of Santa Cruz that the American or English visitor will probably find his greatest amusement. The large blushing conks and other shells which strew the beach; the corals, madrepores, sea-fans, and sponges of many definite and curious shapes, not to mention the 'soldier-crabs,' dressed in regimentals of purple and scarlet, and inhabiting every empty shell they can find, cannot fail to attract the attention of the lovers of nature, even when, like myself, they have little pretensions to science. Yet it must be confessed that all these rarities are nothing in comparison with the fishes.

"The fish-market at West End is held under some cocoa-nut trees, on the shore, a little before noon, every day. To watch the arrival of the boats on these occasions, and to examine the live fish, before they are taken out, or after they are laid on the grass, under the shade, is a source of almost endless amusement. The variety of the kinds, and the brightness of their colours, are truly surprising. I know only their vulgar names, and vulgar indeed they are; but I cannot do justice to my theme without specifying the *grunt*, striped with alternate lines of yellow and purple; the *goat*, pink and silver; the *doctor*, of burnished copper; the *Welshman*, pink with yellow stripes; the *hind*, white with red and brown spots; the *rock-hind*, green with brown spots; the *parrot*, dark brown, blue, and yellow; the *silk-fish*, of a bright pink; the *blare-eye*, pink with a prodigious white eye; the *Spanish hog*, bright yellow and brown; the *angel*, of the finest gold and purple; to which list might be added a multitude of others. These fishes are generally from one to two pounds in weight, and with others of a larger dimension, but not so splendid, are generally good for the table—no small resource even for the poorer inhabitants of Santa Cruz. Our friend, Dr. Griffith, an able naturalist from the United States, who was with us on the island, was very successful in preserving these gaudy creatures, without destroying their colour. I understand that he has since presented his collection to one of the scientific institutions in Philadelphia."—*A Winter in the West Indies*, by Joseph John Gurney, pp. 14—16.

*St. Thomas*.—"Perhaps the greatest object of curiosity in this island is a prodigious specimen of the *Bombax Seva* [*Ceiba*?], or silk cotton-tree, which grows about two miles to the westward of the town. This tree, which bears a light foliage and pods full of silky cotton (suitable, we are told, for the manufacture of hats), loses its leaves once in the year. In the present instance it was quite bare—its trunk about fifty feet in circumference, of a contorted shape, with high thin battlements or projections,—its vast branches, spreading to a great distance, at right angles with the trunk, and shooting out others nearly at right angles with themselves, some parts of it encumbered with enormous knots. This tree is of African descent; the specimen now described may fairly be called a vegetable monster. We were amused by observing upon it the works of a species of ant, called the wood-louse. The central city of these little creatures occupied a fork formed by two of the branches; and from this

point streets or avenues were seen diverging over the tree in every direction, all teeming with a busy population."—*Ibid*, pp. 29, 30.

*Dominica*.—"The zoology of Dominica is quite interesting. The wild boar is found in the woods; a species of boa constrictor is also met with, and not unfrequently pays a fatal visit to the poultry-yard. Paroquets are numerous, and several kinds of humming-birds abound. Immense numbers of land-crabs, at certain seasons, afford excellent food for all who take the trouble of catching them. The same may be said of the crapeaus, very large frogs, which frequent the pure, running waters, and are, as we can testify, an excellent article of diet, the meat tasting like that of a chicken. But it is the vegetable luxuriance of this island which is the most striking to the eye of a stranger, far exceeding anything that we have elsewhere witnessed, except, perhaps, in some parts of Jamaica. Innumerable shrubs, plants and trees, novel to us, with broad-leaved creepers of various kinds, cover the hills with a remarkable depth of verdure. The most beautiful of these productions is the tree-fern, which grows to the height of twenty or even thirty feet, and waves its bright green feathers over the whole scenery of the island."—*Ibid*, pp. 77, 78.

METEOROLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS FOR DEC. 1840.

*Chiswick*.—Dec. 1. Hazy: overcast and mild. 2. Very fine. 3. Frosty: fine. 4. Sharp frost: overcast. 5, 6. Hazy. 7. Overcast. 8. Rain. 9. Frosty: clear. 10. Thawing: hazy. 11. Hazy. 12, 13. Overcast and cold. 14. Sharp frost. 15. Dry frosty air. 16. Overcast: snowing. 17. Snowing: cloudy: severe frost at night. 18. Frosty: overcast and cold. 19. Hazy: rain. 20, 21. Overcast and cold. 22—24. Severe frost. 25. Intense frost: Dense fog. 26. Thick hoar frost. 27—29. Foggy. 30. Clear: cloudy: rain at night. 31. Cloudy: clear and fine.

The mean temperature of this month was lower than that of any December within at least the last forty years.

*Boston*.—Dec. 1. Cloudy: rain early A.M. 2—4. Fine. 5—7. Cloudy. 8. Rain: rain early A.M. 9. Fine. 10—13. Cloudy. 14. Cloudy: snow P.M. 15. Cloudy: snow A.M. 16. Snow. 17, 18, Cloudy. 19. Rain. 20, 21. Cloudy. 22—24. Fine. 25—29. Cloudy. 30. Fine: rain P.M. 31. Fine.

This is the coldest December since 1829.

*Applegarth Mause, Dumfries-shire*.—Dec. 1. Raw but fair. 2, 3. Fine and fair. 4. Slight showers. 5, 6. Drizzling. 7. Wet and stormy. 8. Fair, but cloudy. 9, 10. Fair, but wet preceding night. 11—13. Fair throughout. 14—16. Hard frost. 17. Thaw, with slight drizzle. 18. Frost again. 19. Slight frost A.M.: drizzle. 20. Frost: Aurora Borealis. 21—24. Frost. 25. Frost A.M.: thaw P.M. 26. Frost again, but cloudy. 27. Thaw A.M.: cloudy and dark. 28. Frost but slight. 29. Frost—moderate. 30. Thaw and snow. 31. Raw and drizzly.

Sun shone out 21 days. Rain fell 9 days. Snow 1 day. Frost 14 days.

Wind north 1 day. North-north-east 1 day. North-east  $7\frac{1}{2}$  days. East-north-east 1 day. East 4 days. East-south-east 3 days. South-east 3 days. South-south-east 1 day. South 1 day. South-west  $3\frac{1}{2}$  days. West south-west 1 day. West 2 days. North-west 2 days.

Calm 12 days. Moderate 8 days. Brisk 6 days. Strong breeze 1 day. Boisterous 4 days.

Mean temperature of the month ..... 36°

Mean temperature of December 1839 ... 34 ·9

Mean temperature of spring-water ..... 42 ·16

